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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS, PRESIDENT
OBAMA'S ADDRESS ON AFGHANISTAN

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage December 9 on the U.S. beef issue, which was stalled at the legislative sessions Tuesday due to a boycott by DPP legislators; on the aftermath of the December 5 city mayors' and county magistrates' elections around the island; and on the upcoming fourth round of talks between Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation and China's Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait, which will be held in Taichung. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an op-ed in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" said the results of last Saturday's local elections in Taiwan sent a clear and powerful message to the Obama administration -- namely, the Taiwan people have used their votes to check and balance the arrogance and self-righteousness of their leader, and that the Obama administration should pay more respect to Taiwan's democracy. A column in the KMT-leaning "China Times" discussed U.S. President Barack Obama's December 1 address on Afghanistan and concluded that Obama is following the course laid down by his predecessor and still wants to be the "head of the world's police." End summary.

¶2. U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations

"The Message That Taiwan People Send to Obama"

Liu Shih-chung, now a Visiting Fellow at the U.S.-based Brookings Institution, opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation 520,000] (12/9):

"Through the results of last Saturday's three-in-one local city mayors' and county magistrates' elections, a majority of the Taiwan voters have sent a clear and powerful message to U.S. President Barack Obama, who has just returned from a visit to China and signed a controversial joint statement with Chinese President Hu Jintao: Namely, Taiwan, being a small country, may be powerless and has no intention to obstruct the United States' determined policy direction to engage with the 'rising China.' But the most powerful way for Taiwan to defend itself is to use its democratic votes to check and balance the arrogance and self-righteousness of its ruler, and to further influence the [government] policy balance and policy direction.

"The most controversial part in the 'Obama-Hu' joint statement concerning Taiwan is that it stated in black and white that the two nations 'respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity,' and 'look forward to efforts by both sides [of the Taiwan Strait] to increase interactions in economic and political fields.' The Ma Ying-jeou administration has a numb central nervous system and thus always feels good about itself, but the DPP and many of those who know the triangular relations among the United States, China and Taiwan well have all expressed grave concerns. The Obama administration soon sent AIT Board [sic] Chairman Raymond Burghardt to Taiwan in an attempt to placate [the island] and clarify [the episode] by stressing that what was referred to in the afore-mentioned statement were Tibet and Xinjiang, not Taiwan. Yet Beijing immediately reiterated to the international community that Taiwan is part of China's sovereignty and its territorial integrity.

Burghardt further explained that the United States has no intention to push both sides [of the Taiwan Strait] to engage in political dialogue. Yet China, [on the other hand], has long since put pressure on, and mapped out the course for political talks, in terms of the Ma administration's cross-Strait policy thinking of 'economics ahead of politics.'

"Even though Burghardt was speaking on behalf of the U.S. government, his audience was mostly from Taiwan's ruling and opposition parties. Many people in the international community would be easily misled by Beijing and believe that 'Washington agrees or accepts that Taiwan is part of China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.' Unless higher-ranking U.S. officials, such as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton or even Obama himself, reiterate the public declaration made by former President Bill Clinton in February 2000, that 'the future of both sides of the Taiwan Strait must be determined with the consent of the Taiwan people,' the pace for Washington to tilt toward Beijing will only accelerate. ...

"[Saturday's] elections have also allowed the strategists of the Obama administration on Asia-Pacific policy, who have been feeling relaxed about the relatively stable cross-Strait relations now, to finally accept the fact that Ma can be defeated. The Ma administration's means of constantly flattering the Obama administration via diplomatic channels have also gradually ceased to work, as shown by the fact that Taiwan's recent decision to re-open its market to U.S. beef has triggered anti-U.S. sentiments on some parts of the island. The Americans were puzzled why U.S. beef could become a major issue in Taiwan's local elections. Ma's failure to pass this 'mid-term examination' and the fact that the DPP has a better chance to stage a comeback earlier than expected have drawn closer attention of the U.S. strategists on Asia-Pacific policy as OBAMA'S ADDRESS ON AFGHANISTAN

to whether Ma will adjust his cross-Strait policy in the future.

"The Obama administration should understand that cross-Strait relations are not the only or major factor for Taiwan voters to determine the ability of their leaders. Ma has invested many resources in opening and managing cross-Strait relations since he assumed office, and thereby allowed Washington, whose hands are already full, not to worry too much [about cross-Strait tensions]. But the Obama administration must never overlook the values of Taiwan's democracy or take the KMT's long-term governance or the relatively stable cross-Strait relations for granted. The message sent out by [Saturday's] elections is crystal clear -- namely, only the [Taiwan] people are their masters; Obama should pay more respect to the universal values of democracy and let the 'Taiwan people use their votes to decide their future.'"

13. President Obama's Address on Afghanistan

"U.S. Foreign Policy -- Military Force as Its Vanguard"

Columnist Lin Po-wen wrote in his column in the KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] (12/9):

"... It is quite disappointing that Obama did not dare to break tradition, and, like his predecessors, he still likes to be the 'world's policeman' and show off [the United States'] might. A phrase that previous U.S. presidents like best is 'the foreign policy propped up by military forces.' As a matter of fact, since the Roosevelt administration at the beginning of the 20th century, the United States has moved toward a 'foreign policy using its military force as its vanguard' -- with carrot and stick together, it is akin to typical imperialism. ...

"...The war in Afghanistan today has been labeled as 'Obama's war.' Obama adopted the strategy to 'exit after sending more troops [to the battlefield].' But the question is: Will [the United States] be able to withdraw its troops eighteen months from now? How many soldiers will it pull back and how many will stay [in Afghanistan]? Will the undisciplined Afghan soldiers and policemen be able to replace the U.S. troops and those of its allies? Many reasons caused the defeat of [the United States in] the Vietnam War, and one of them was the corruption and incompetence of the Saigon government. ... Now that the United States has run into a worse

government of Karzai, how is it going to fight the war in Afghanistan? Perhaps the ideas of 'permanent sense of crisis' and 'using military force as its vanguard' have been pushing Obama to become the head of the 'world police.'"

STANTON